



Session update from Olympia – Mar. 6, 2011

Major reform: health care

Last week [on my blog](#) I discussed the major reforms the Legislature has undertaken in our K-12 system over the past two years. This week [my blog post](#) focused on similar systematic reforms lawmakers have recently enacted around the delivery of health care.

It's no secret that the unsustainable growth rate of costs associated with health care is wreaking havoc across the country upon the budgets of businesses, families and governments at the local, state and federal levels. In Washington, where the state spends \$12 billion to cover medical and dental care for approximately 1.2 million individuals - nearly half of whom are children from low-income families - health care inflation costs borne by the state have doubled over the past decade.

At the same time, legislators have invested in solutions that improve patient outcomes and decrease costs throughout the system. These solutions have been at the forefront of states' efforts to reform their health care systems, and played a major role in the discussion about health care reform at the national level. As a result, our state system is well calibrated to capitalize on the significant benefits available to the states as a result of federal health reform. To read more about this topic [click here](#).

Floor Action in the Senate

This week was an important week in the legislature. The Senate worked late evenings into Saturday to consider a myriad of bills as we approach the "cut-off" Monday for bills in their house of origin. The cut-off

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deadline means that bills that do not get voted out of the Senate by tomorrow are considered “dead.” On average only 10% of all bills introduced reach final passage.

Year	Number of Bills
2011	858
2009	1,106
2007	1,122
2005	1,056
2003	1,006
2001	1,122
1999	1,106
1997	1,029

The chart above shows the number of bills introduced in the legislature, at the end of week 7, compared to other 105 day sessions. This trend is likely due to a broad understanding of the complex and significant budgetary challenges we are facing.

Time to ‘Innovate Washington’

The Senate this week passed legislation to help make Washington the nation’s leader in clean energy and other groundbreaking technologies by creating a statewide consortium called Innovate Washington. The program will combine the Washington Technology Center and the Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute (SIRTI) to help identify areas of state expertise and ramp them up to compete globally by optimizing the transfer of technology between the state’s research institutions and businesses. Among other things, [Senate Bill 5764](#) will help schools and businesses create new technologies and acquire grants.

WA Leads in IT Piracy Prevention

Americans are well-familiar with the many headlines in recent months about the destruction to property and lives done at the hands of Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean. But an invisible and underreported kind of piracy – the piracy of American information technology overseas – presents a much more pervasive threat to American interests, and holds the potential to undermine the innovation advantage American and

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Washington workers must maintain in order to remain competitive in the 21st century economy.

In Washington, information technology is a nearly \$14 billion industry supporting 1,500 companies and a workforce of 186,000 individuals – 50,000 in software alone. A landmark bill approved today by the state Senate would make Washington ground zero in the reversal of the growing trend of foreign interests stealing American intellectually property.

Pirated information technology is illegal in the U.S., but there's no shortage of foreign suppliers eager to gain unfair economic advantage from intellectual property they have neither innovated nor invested in themselves. It's estimated that the rate of pirated information technology in China – our fastest-growing trade partner and competitor – is as high as 90 percent. This amounts to an 'innovation subsidy' of foreign companies with whom Americans and Washingtonians are competing for jobs. My proposal, [Senate Bill 5449](#), which passed this week would address this issue by encouraging Washington companies to stop contracting with firms who steal intellectual property, creating legal remedies for companies against competitors that steal their intellectual property, cleaning the supply chain of pirated information technology, and adding tens of thousands of jobs and billions in revenues to our state and national economy.

The issue of pirated information technology is significant enough that our state cannot wait for action at the federal level, and that Washington's legislative remedies could prompt Congress to take up the issue on a nation-wide basis much sooner than it otherwise would.

YMC-yAy!

On Monday, I introduced [SR 8623](#), a resolution that honors the rich and important history of the YMCA and their founding 160 years ago. The first YMCA in the state was the YMCA of the Inland Northwest. Last year Y's across Washington engaged more than 600,000 people and nearly half of them were children. Also, last year nearly 21,000 Washingtonians of all ages volunteered their time to help strengthen YMCA communities. Locally our Central Y in the heart of Spokane is nationally unique because it is the first YMCA ever to share its facility with the YWCA, and combine resources to more effectively serve members. Membership at the Central, North and Valley YMCA's has more than tripled and membership is currently at an all time high with 42,000 members. That is nearly 9% of all residents in Spokane County and demonstrates they knew what they were doing 160 years ago, and they continue to know how to serve our

Join us for one of our 3rd District Town Halls

Please RSVP by e-mail to:
3rdDistLegis@leg.wa.gov if
you are able to attend one of
our 3rd District Town Halls.

10:00 a.m.

Northeast Community Center
4001 North Cook Street

2:00 p.m.

Northwest Museum of Arts and
Culture
2316 W. 1st Avenue

communities today.



Did you know that more than 7,800 Washington children per week received licensed child care at a YMCA? With the passing of [Senate Bill 5172](#), a bill I sponsored, that number will likely grow. Currently the child care center at the Y that members use while they work out is not available to fitness instructors that teach classes. SB 5172 authorizes the use of short-term, on-site child care for the children of facility employees.

Lisa, Langston and the Legislature

This last week Langston Ward was on assignment for me in the Senate Page Program. Langston is a tenth grader who attends Mead High School and helped to perform many tasks that allow Senators and staff to focus on legislative duties. In addition, he spent two hours each day in Page School learning about the legislative process and observing state government in

action. The page program is for students 14-16 years of age. Thank you Langston!

Applications to the Senate Page Program can be submitted no later than 5 weeks before the end of the legislative session - there is still time left! If you or somebody you know is interested in being a page this legislative session please click [here](#) for more information or click [here](#) to download an application. Please mail the completed application to: Senator Lisa Brown, PO Box 40403, Olympia, WA 98504.

I greatly appreciate hearing from you. Please continue to [phone, mail or e-mail me](#) or my [staff](#) with your thoughts on various issues, ideas or concerns you have as the legislative session moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

P.S. Remember to check out the Senate Democrats' [podcast](#) "In the Loop" for a summary of the week's events or visit us on twitter [@WASenDemocrats](#). A tip for twitter users, follow [#waleg](#) to see what other people are saying about the Washington State Legislature!

Click [here](#) for contact information for my Olympia or Spokane office.